CITY OF
SAN JOSE
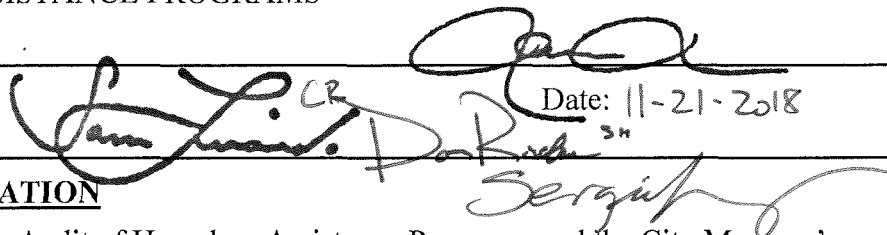CAPITAL OF SILICON VALLEY

Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mayor Sam Liccardo
Councilmember Sergio Jimenez
Councilmember Raul Peralez
Councilmember Don Rocha

SUBJECT: AUDIT OF HOMELESS
ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

DATE: November 21, 2018

Approved by:

Date: 11-21-2018

RECOMMENDATION

1. Accept the Audit of Homeless Assistance Programs and the City Manager's response.
2. Direct the City Manager's Office to develop an enterprise-wide homelessness response workplan by Spring 2019, including the following:
   a. Description of activities planned by each responsible department as well as a timeline for such activities;
   b. Discussion of ongoing efforts to formalize the newly initiated cross-agency collaborative efforts with the County of Santa Clara;
   c. Discussion of activities included in the plan focused on efforts to develop interim housing solutions; and
   d. Target dates for formal reporting to City Council.
3. Add to Audit recommendation #2: Work with the Mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation and the City Manager's Innovation Office to assess what resources would be required to develop a San Jose-based equivalent of "Link-SF" to better disseminate critical information to homeless residents (see p.33), and to enable the CoC to better gather data to assess needs. Such development may require grant funding and creative resourcing such as by partnering with Joint Venture: Silicon Valley's Silicon Valley Talent Partnership, the Unleash Your Geek competition, or SJSU.
4. Add to Audit Recommendations #4 & 5: Clarify what the legal requirements the City must comply with that have compelled the substantial increase in creek encampment abatements, with specific reference to (1) the ruling and threat of daily fines from a State of California environmental regulatory agency in 2014, and (2) the BayKeeper settlement and Court Order regarding water quality standards. Report findings to Council and the public, so that the policy of creek encampment abatement can be clearly assessed, and if necessary, the appropriate agencies responsible for the mandate can be requested to fund its compliance.

5. Add to Audit recommendation #5 (c) a recommendation to track when and why homeless residents decline referrals, including why residents decline shelter placements (e.g., for such reasons as rules or other restrictions).

BACKGROUND

We thank the City Auditor's Office for this report and the Housing Department for its tireless efforts in working to reduce homelessness in our City. The audit makes clear that while the majority of our homeless residents continue to remain unsheltered each night, the resources for our unhoused residents and those who are at great risk of homelessness could be managed more effectively.

One of the opportunities we have is greater collaboration within City Hall, and outside. We are encouraged the City Manager has prioritized "Creating Housing and Preventing Homelessness" for the City Manager's Office and citywide organization. Formalizing housing production and homeless prevention requires a formal process of collaboration among the numerous City departments who respond to our homelessness crisis. We understand the City Manager's Office and County Executive's Office planned to co-present on cross-agency collaborative efforts recently initiated at the October 23, 2018 City/County Joint Meeting, but that time limitations pushed this report out to early 2019. As the homeless crisis continues to grow, our interdepartmental, and intergovernmental, work will be important to align goals, services, resources, and policies. It is important the Administration report back on the workplan, efforts with the County, and future Task Force to help guide future policy considerations and the budget process; therefore, we recommend early 2019.

Developing more interim housing must be one of the workplan's key activities. Even though we recognize that Permanent Supportive Housing is a best practice in addressing homelessness, we cannot build quickly enough to address the needs of the unsheltered residents in our City. Whether we add bridge housing, try navigation centers, create safe parking sites, build shelters, or sanction community-led solutions like Hope Village— there must be more urgency and focus on finding interim solutions, especially now after the City's housing bond failed to pass.

We need a better understanding of why bed utilization is not at 100%, including tracking reasons why services, including beds and shelters, are declined. Anecdotally, we know that people refuse shelter because pets are not accepted, partners or families get separated and cannot stay together, or other barriers are in place making it difficult for our houseless resident to be accommodated appropriately. Having this information enables the City to align our policies and resources, with the outcome of ensuring more homeless residents can access services. Finally digital tools like link-SF, while not a silver bullet, can empower homeless residents to identify resources best suited to their needs in a more timely and efficient manner.